

**THE COSTS TO FOSTER CARERS OF PROVIDING  
ACCOMMODATION FOR FOSTERING:**

**A REPORT FOR THE FOSTERING NETWORK**

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## **Foreword**

The Fostering Network has commissioned this report from Professor Rebecca Tunstall in order to increase understanding of the costs borne by foster carers in providing the requisite living space to accommodate the children they foster. So far there has been little investigation of these costs and their implication for foster carers and for the provision of placements.

This ground-breaking new research by Professor Tunstall is an important first step in increasing our understanding, and in helping us consider what might be the policy implications affecting matters such as allowances and grants to foster carers, and the allocation of social housing.

Professor Tunstall has used a variety of primary and secondary sources, including a survey of foster carers carried out by The Fostering Network among its members in July 2014.

The Fostering Network is very grateful to Professor Tunstall and to all the foster carers who participated in the survey.

## CONTENTS

Summary	p. 4
Main report	p. 8
1. Introduction	p. 8
2. Data and methods	p.12
3. Foster carers in the survey	p.13
4. Survey evidence on foster carers' homes, how homes are used for fostering and how additional accommodation was provided	p.16
5. Data on the costs of providing one or more additional rooms for fostering	p.25
6. Assistance with accommodation costs for foster carers	p.36
7. Survey evidence on out-of-pocket costs to foster carers of providing accommodation	p.39
8. The role of housing and housing cost in decisions to foster and to continue to foster	p.41
9. Implications for fostering and for fostering agencies	p.43
References	p.47
Appendices	
1. Methods for calculating the costs of providing additional accommodation for fostering	p.48
2. Additional tables	p.50

# THE COSTS TO FOSTER CARERS OF PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION FOR FOSTERING: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

## Introduction

- Fostering agencies usually require foster carers to provide a separate bedroom for each child fostered, as well as ensuring high health and safety standards and providing adaptations and facilities to meet any special needs.
- Foster carers receive an allowance from fostering agencies to cover some elements of the cost of fostering, including food, clothing and activities for the child, and some household costs and they may be paid a fee for their time. However, fostering allowances do not generally cover any costs of providing accommodation for fostered children. Local authorities do provide grants for housing extensions and adaptations, but demand for funds exceeds supply.
- Several studies have found that the financial costs of fostering and allowances and fees play at least some part in decisions to start fostering and to continue fostering. Those on low incomes may feel that costs are prohibitive. In recent research on the costs of raising a fostered child, foster carers highlighted the costs of providing a separate room for each fostered child.

## Aims and methods

- This report aims to provide an overview of the costs of providing additional accommodation for a fostered child. It is intended to inform discussions about whether there should be an element to cover accommodation in foster carers' allowances, and if so, what it might be, and whether current local authority grants programmes could be revised.
- This report is based on a rapid review of previous research about foster carers and their housing, an electronic survey of foster carers carried out by The Fostering Network in July 2014, and evidence on housing costs from key data sources.

## Foster carers' homes

- The majority of survey respondents were home owners (59% owners with a mortgage; 16% outright owners, 12% private renters, 11% social renters).
- Two fifths of foster carers were providing one bedroom for fostering, another two fifths were providing two, and one tenth were providing three or more.

In addition, a fifth of respondents were also providing accommodation to young people they had previously fostered but who had reached the age of 18.

- The minimum increase in household bedroom needs due to fostering was typically from one to two bedrooms, one to three, two to three, or two to four bedrooms.

### **Opportunity costs of using spare rooms, the marginal cost of extra rooms, and out-of-pocket costs**

- Some foster carers had spare rooms when they first considered fostering. They did not incur any out-of-pocket costs to provide space. However, they still incurred 'opportunity costs' from not using the space for other things, such as having a lodger. The potential lodger income lost ranged from £55 a week per room in Sunderland to £164 a week in Central London.
- Other respondents had to incur out-of-pocket expenses to get sufficient suitable space to foster. A minority of respondents mentioned moving house to get a larger home more suitable for fostering. In the part of the UK in the middle of the range<sup>1</sup> in 2012, the need for extra space might mean an increase in house prices of between 7% and 56%, or £24,000-£125,000. An extra room could cost as little as £13,000 (for the difference between the prices for a one-bedroom and two-bedroom home in Northern Ireland or the North West of England) or as much as £250,000 (for the difference between a two-bedroom and four-bedroom home in London).
- In social renting, getting a larger home would mean increases in rents of 6-38% or £10-£20 a week in the median region. In the lowest cost regions (in the midlands and north), extra costs were under £10 a week. In the highest cost regions, London and the South East, they were close to £20 a week. These sums might appear small, but they form a substantial fraction of modest incomes.
- In private renting, the typical additional minimum space needs for fostering meant increases in rents of 15-64%. In the median area this meant an increase in costs of £20-30 a week. In the lowest cost areas, the Midlands and North, extra costs were under £10 a week. However, the difference in rent between a two- and four-bedroom home in Central London was £737.50 a week.

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<sup>1</sup> The median amongst the UK's nations and the English regions

- A large minority of respondents had not moved house to get the space needed for fostering, but instead had changed their existing home with extensions, conversions, disabled adaptations, or additional fixtures and fittings. 7% of respondents had received some local authority funding for this work. However, similar numbers had paid for this work themselves, quoting out-of-pocket costs from £8,000 to £50,000. These are substantial sums, likely to be prohibitive for those in the population with low incomes or difficulties getting credit.

### **Implications for recruitment and retention**

- 46% of survey respondents thought that the cost and availability of suitable accommodation affected the decision or ability to foster. A few carers said they would stop fostering due to housing costs. Survey respondents did not include those who had left fostering or who had considered fostering but rejected it, so this may underestimate the problems associated with housing costs. The fact that in the highest cost areas, lower proportions of respondents were home owners or private renters than in other areas, suggests some were being deterred by housing costs.

### **Implications for policy**

- Providing some support to acknowledge the additional housing costs of fostering would enable more people to consider fostering, and would aid retention.
- Designing support for housing costs of fostering is likely to be complex. Some foster carers incur only opportunity costs. House moves, extensions and conversions that facilitate fostering may also benefit home owners. Housing costs vary more dramatically between areas than other costs of fostering. Costs also vary by tenure. The way in which support might be calculated may have to vary by tenure, but yet be fair between households.
- Adding an element to reflect additional ongoing housing costs to foster carers in median cost areas might mean a modest percentage increases in allowances. However, adding an element to reflect additional home ownership and private renting costs for foster carers in London and the South East could mean a dramatic increase in allowances in these areas.
- The availability and use of local authority grants for extensions, conversions, adaptations and other fixtures and fittings should also be considered.



# THE COSTS TO FOSTER CARERS OF PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION FOR FOSTERING: THE FULL REPORT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A majority of foster carers are paid allowances by fostering agencies to cover some elements of the cost of fostering, including food, clothing and activities for the child, and some household costs, and may be paid fees to cover their time. There has been debate about how well fostering allowances and fees meet costs (e.g. Tearse 2010, Hirsch et al. 2012). In 2013, The Fostering Network commissioned research looking at the costs of providing an acceptable minimum living standard for fostered children. This found there were extra costs of providing the same minimum to fostered children compared with other children (Davies and Padley 2013). This research did not cover the cost of providing accommodation, but researchers found that,

*“foster carers highlighted the potential additional costs involved in providing a separate room for each foster child”* (Davies and Padley 2013 p8).

Another report by members of the same team said,

*“For those renting in the private sector... an additional room even in modestly priced accommodation can add approximately £25,000 to the lifetime cost of a child [0-18 years; £1,300 per year]”* (Hirsch et al. 2012 p10).

This amounts to approximately an additional 20% on top of all the other costs of raising a child in Hirsch et al.’s estimates. However, the national minimum fostering allowances set by the governments in Northern Ireland, Wales and UK (for England) do not include housing costs (The Fostering Network 2011). This issue triggered the present report.

Foster carers must be able to provide accommodation for the fostered child or children in their own homes. The possession of a spare room features prominently in foster carer recruitment:

*“If you have a spare room, childcare experience, call us and find out more”* (from TACT fostering agency website)<sup>2</sup>;

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<sup>2</sup> [http://tactcare.org.uk/fostering/change-a-life/?gclid=CJ3O\\_byK6L8CFUvpwgodY1UAhw£form](http://tactcare.org.uk/fostering/change-a-life/?gclid=CJ3O_byK6L8CFUvpwgodY1UAhw£form)

*“To become a foster carer, here are some key things that you need: A spare bedroom; Enthusiasm, flexibility and commitment; A passion to make a difference to a young person’s life!”* (from Capstone fostering agency website)<sup>3</sup> [emphasis added].

Based on the statutory National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services in England, Standard 10, issued by the Department for Education, fostering agencies usually require that each foster child over the age of three has his or her own bedroom, unless the circumstances are exceptional.<sup>4</sup> Agencies usually rule out allowing the fostered child to share a room with any existing household member, but might permit sharing with another child, particularly a sibling. Standard 10 also stipulates that the foster home must “*comfortably accommodate all who live there*”. It must provide adequate shared space in the rest of the home, and must be of adequate quality. Fostering agencies make particular requirements for health and safety features, which may be more than the typical home generally provides. In addition, some fostered children have special needs which demand adapted accommodation or additional space. It is worth noting that foster carers must keep the space in their home available, even when they are between placements.

A bedroom for each child is a higher standard than the ‘bedroom standard’ which government expects for non-fostered children (The Fostering Network 2011), and which has been used in the allocation of social housing since 1960 (Holmans, 2005). This standard expects that children aged under sixteen, usually siblings, will share a bedroom if they are of the same gender. However, public expectations are higher than the bedroom standard. A study for the Child Poverty Action Group found that parents believed older children needed their own bedrooms, and additional downstairs space, and some of those with four children felt the household needed a second bathroom (Hirsch et al. 2012).

The need to provide each child with a bedroom means that fostering is open only to those who have one or more ‘spare’ bedrooms in their home, or to those who can free up a room by getting existing household members to share, or by converting a room into a bedroom for fostering from other uses, such as a visitors’ bedroom or office. Some fostering placements are only open to those whose home can provide a downstairs bedroom or other adapted accommodation and room for equipment. Those who don’t have a spare bedroom can only foster if they extend their home, or move to a bigger

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<sup>3</sup> [www.capstonefostercare.co.uk](http://www.capstonefostercare.co.uk)

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education, 2011, Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/dfe-00029-2011>

one. Both these processes carry considerable monetary costs, and are disruptive, and may be particularly difficult to arrange for some households, for example social tenants.

In fact, the vast majority of UK households do have 'spare' bedrooms.<sup>5</sup> However, in practice, potential foster carers with one or more 'spare' bedrooms who decide to use the space for fostering, face monetary and non-monetary costs from doing so. Larger homes are more expensive to buy or to rent, and to maintain. Potential foster carers may have decided to have extra rooms or have ended up with extra rooms regardless of fostering plans, and home owners may benefit from any extra capital gains a larger home may provide. However, owners and tenants face ongoing higher mortgage, rent and maintenance costs from larger homes. The decision to start using spare rooms for fostering means a decision not to downsize to reduce housing costs, and not to use the space for the household. 'Spare' rooms could be put to regular alternative use, if not as a bedroom for a household member. They could be rented to lodgers. Public discussion of the social rented sector size criteria for Housing Benefit (the 'bedroom tax') has demonstrated how rooms may be used for stays by children where the household member does not have full-time custody, for stays by adult children or carers, and for storing equipment related to disability.

Many foster carers have a career of providing foster placements over many years. However, their continued ability to provide spare rooms and to pay the cost of accommodation for fostering cannot be taken for granted, and may change over time, as their own households' needs and their incomes change. For example, foster carers might want to provide their own children with more space, or to downsize to reduce housing costs. More young people are staying longer in the family home, or returning to the family home after a period away. This could apply both to the foster carer's own children, and to formerly fostered children. The monetary and non-monetary costs of providing extra accommodation for fostering may be crystallised when foster carers think about moving home during their fostering career.

Studies have repeatedly demonstrated that the main motive for starting and continuing fostering is to provide help to children and young people, and that financial motives are not important. However, several studies have found that the financial costs of fostering play at least some role in potential foster carers' decisions to start fostering, and in existing foster carers' decisions to continue fostering (e.g. Tearse 2010). Those on low incomes may feel that these costs are prohibitive.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2013/14, 71% of households in England had one or more bedrooms in excess of the number required according to the 'bedroom standard' (DCLG 2015).

Over the past twenty years, housing affordability has worsened. Thus today's foster carers, and potential foster carers are likely to face higher accommodation costs and greater problems affording accommodation than similar groups in the past. This change is of concern, given that about 13% of foster carers left their service in 2012-13<sup>6</sup>.

Fostering allowances themselves do not usually contain any element intended to compensate foster carers for providing extra accommodation for fostering. Those who want to provide placements for children and young people with special needs may be able to claim full- or part-grants from their local authorities to cover the costs of extensions and other work.

This report aims to supply The Fostering Network with an overview of the costs of providing additional accommodation for a fostered child, which affect potential and current foster carers. This could form the basis of future discussions about whether there should be an element to cover accommodation in foster carers' allowances, or whether current local authority grants programmes could be revised, or whether more accommodation could be made available to foster carers in the social rented sector.

There are several ways of thinking about the costs of additional accommodation. The report aims to take account of the range of housing tenure of foster carers and geographical differences in costs across the UK, including a range of social and economic factors which affect housing tenure and costs. Actual costs will vary considerably between individual cases. However, the aim is to identify a range of costs which could be applied by different local authorities, and which would cover the situations of the majority of foster carers.

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (2013) Local Authority Fostering Service: Benchmark Report 2012-13, Department for Education with Impower and The Fostering Network  
Available at <http://www.fostering.net/search/node/benchmark#.VVysluGYHom>

## 2. DATA AND METHODS

This report is based on three sources of evidence:

1. Evidence from a rapid review of previous research about foster carers, their housing, and housing costs;
2. An electronic survey of foster carers carried out by The Fostering Network in July 2014, covering the characteristics of foster carers, their fostering careers and their homes, any help received with housing moves, adaptations and other costs, and issues arising from this;
3. Evidence on housing costs by nation of the UK, housing tenure, size and other measures, derived from National Statistics and other key data sources.

The survey was advertised by The Fostering Network in its e-news of July 2014 circulated to all individual members of The Fostering Network for whom email addresses were available. It was also advertised on The Fostering Network website, and attention was drawn to it through Twitter. It was open for two weeks from 24 July to 6 August and received 705 responses from foster care households. In 2010 there were approximately 43,000 approved foster care households in the UK (Tearse 2010). Thus the survey response constitutes almost 2% of all foster care households. The term 'survey respondents' in this report refers to foster carers who responded to The Fostering Network survey on accommodation in July 2014. Quotations from free response sections of the questionnaire are given verbatim.

Survey respondents were necessarily self-selecting. Those more concerned about the issue of housing costs may have been more likely to respond. However, there appeared to be a good geographical representation of foster carers. The number of foster carers in social housing was low compared to the population as a whole, but this may reflect the tenure distribution of foster carers. All of the respondents were approved foster carers, currently providing foster care or eligible for and awaiting placements. McDermid et al. provide a useful reminder of the need to think about the situation of those who are not or are no longer foster carers too:

*"The majority of the literature draws on samples of existing foster carers... the existing evidence base is limited with regard to the barriers perceived by prospective carers and the reasons why foster carers leave"* (McDermid et al. 2012 p46).

The report uses a range of methods to think about and calculate accommodation costs faced by foster carers.

### 3. FOSTER CARERS IN THE SURVEY

The survey asked foster carers about their fostering activities. All of the survey respondents were approved foster carers. The majority (57%) offered placements of more than one type. The greatest number offered long-term placements (68%), followed by short-term placements (67%) and respite care (46%) (Appendix Table 1). Unfortunately, the survey was not able to/did not distinguish between kinship foster carers and other foster carers, although free responses indicated that the sample included both.

About half of the respondents offered placements for children aged 5-11 (50%) and half to children aged 12-18 (49%) (Appendix Table 2). Just over a third offered placements to babies and young children (40%). A large group offered placements to children of varied ages (either simultaneously or at different times). A small minority of the respondents offered parent and baby placements (7%). These might not require more than one bedroom, but might require a large bedroom for parent and baby to share. Nearly half offered placements to sibling groups (46%). In some cases siblings may be permitted to share bedrooms; in most cases this would mean offering more than one bedroom to accommodate the children (Appendix Table 3).

Just under half of respondents had been fostering for five years or fewer (48%). However, a large proportion of foster carers had been providing foster placements for large parts of their lives: for six to ten years (10%), eleven to twenty years (18%) and more than twenty years (10%) (Appendix Table 4). Both new and very experienced foster carers were represented in the sample. This may mean that the original decision to provide one or more spare rooms in the home for fostering was made some time in the past. The foster carers' own households' housing needs and income may have changed considerably over the time period, and they may have moved home.

The majority of respondents fostered for local authorities (or Health Authorities in Northern Ireland) (72%). The remainder fostered for independent agencies (28%). (Appendix Table 5).

The location of foster carers is important because housing costs vary substantially between nations, regions and localities. Location also allows us to compare the 2014 sample of foster carers against other information on the total population of foster carers and the total UK population. Three quarters of foster carers were living in England, 15%

in Scotland, 6% in Wales and 4% in Northern Ireland (Table 1). Slightly lower proportions of survey residents were resident in England than for the population as a whole, and slightly higher proportions were resident in Scotland.

**Table 1: Location of foster carers by country**

Nation	Location of foster carers		Percentage of UK population in this country, 2011
	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents	
England	516	73%	85%
Scotland	107	15%	8%
Wales	39	6%	5%
Northern Ireland	27	4%	2%
Outside UK (Isle of Man and Channel Islands)	2	*	*
Incomplete postcode	9	1%	
No answer	7	1%	
<i>Total respondents</i>	<i>705</i>		

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014; Census 2011

Government data show that in 2014, 81% of all UK foster placements were in England, 8% were in Scotland, 7% were in Wales and 3% were in Northern Ireland<sup>7</sup>. One foster carer may have one or more foster placements. In addition, an approved foster carer may not have a child in placement at all times. Nonetheless, these data suggest that the survey may under-represent foster carers in England somewhat and over represent those in Scotland.

Within England, nearly one fifth of respondents were located in the South East, with other large fractions in the East, the North West, South West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside (Table 2). These figures are compared below to evidence on all members of The Fostering Network from The Fostering Network database used to produce data by McDermid et al. (2012). They are also compared to the location of the

<sup>7</sup> Available at <http://www.baaf.org.uk/res/statuk>

total English population. The main difference is that lower proportions of survey respondents were resident in London than were foster carers in the earlier survey or the English population overall. London is a higher cost housing area.

**Table 2: Location of foster carers: Region within England**

Region	Location of foster carers		Percentage of foster carers in McDermid et al. 2012	Percentage of English population, 2011
	Number of respondents	Percentage		
South East	95	18%	15%	16%
East	82	16%	14%	11%
North West	65	13%	10%	13%
South West	62	12%	12%	10%
Yorkshire and Humberside	62	12%	9%	10%
West Midlands	59	12%	14%	11%
East Midlands	36	7%	10%	9%
London	29	5%	13%	13%
North East	26	5%	4%	5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>516</i>			

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014; McDermid et al. 2012; Census 2011

These data suggest the July 2104 survey represented foster carers (and The Fostering Network members) well in terms of geography, except for Londoners who were slightly under-represented in the survey.

21% of foster carers described their location as ‘city’ (7% ‘inner city’, 14% ‘outer city’). 42% described their location as a ‘town’. 36% were in a ‘village or rural’ location. The English Housing Survey also examined location by urbanity, although it used different categories. In England in 2012, 21% of households lived in ‘city and other urban centres’, 62% in ‘suburban residential areas’ and 17% in ‘rural areas’<sup>8</sup>. These figures suggest that UK foster carers may be more likely to be in village locations than the

<sup>8</sup> English Housing Survey 2012 Annex Table AT1.5: Type and deprivation of area, by tenure, 2012  
 Accessible at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-profile-of-english-housing-report>

English population as a whole. Villages and rural areas are widely seen as attractive areas to live in, particularly for raising children.

#### **4. SURVEY EVIDENCE ON FOSTER CARERS' HOMES, HOW HOMES ARE USED FOR FOSTERING AND HOW EXTRA ACCOMMODATION WAS PROVIDED**

##### **Foster carers' homes**

The vast majority of respondents lived in houses, rather than in bungalows, flats or maisonettes, and had a private yard or garden (92%). Only 13 lived in flats. (Table 6) Only 14 (2%) did not have access to a private yard or garden (Appendix Table 7). In 2012/13, 92% owner occupiers, and 61% of private renters in England lived in houses rather than flats (DCLG 2014). 86% of households in England had private outdoor space, compared with 92% of the sample foster carers across the UK in 2014<sup>9</sup>. Thus foster carers were as likely or more likely than other households to be in what are typically seen as the most desirable types of home, particularly for raising children.

Very few respondents had homes with 2 bedrooms or fewer (Table 7). The majority had 3 bedrooms or more. The survey responses stopped at '4+' bedrooms (meaning more than four), but free responses suggest that a number of foster carers had very large homes, with six or more bedrooms.

**Table 3: Number of bedrooms in home**

<b>Number of bedrooms</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
None	0	*
1	0	*
2	29	4%
3	228	32%
4	227	32%
4+	214	30%
No answer	2	*

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

<sup>9</sup> Survey of English Housing 2012/13, Fig 5.10, accessible at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-to-2013-household-report>

Foster carers' homes (across the UK) were more likely to have three or more bedrooms than all homes and all owner occupied homes across England. 95% of foster carers' homes had three or more bedrooms. In 2012, 62% of homes in England had three or more bedrooms, while 11% had 1 bedroom, and 27% had two bedrooms<sup>10</sup>. Amongst home owners in England, larger homes predominated: only 3% were one bedroomed homes, only 20% were 2 bedroomed homes, and the remaining 77% had three or more bedrooms.

Housing tenure is important because it affects the extent to which foster carers can initiate alterations to their homes themselves. It also affects the extent to which they are able to move house if they want to. Housing tenure is also a broad proxy for household income. The great majority of respondents were home owners (Table 8). A total of 75% were home owners, including 59% who were buying with a mortgage and 16% who were outright owners.

**Table 4: Housing tenure**

<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
Owned with mortgage	417	59%
Owned outright	116	16%
Rented from private landlord	87	12%
Rented from local authority or housing association	76	11%
Shared ownership	4	1%
No answer	5	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

Home owners formed a higher proportion of the respondent group than they do of the population of England. In 2012/13, 66% of households in England were home owners (DCLG 2014). 33% were owner occupiers buying with a mortgage, 33% were outright owners, 18% were private renters and 17% were social renters (DCLG 2014). The

<sup>10</sup> English Housing Survey 2012; Annex Table AT1.4: Number of bedrooms and dwelling type, by tenure, 2012 Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-housing-survey-2012-profile-of-english-housing-report>

number of foster carers in social housing was low compared to the population as a whole. There is little data available to date on the housing tenure of foster carers.

The tenure of foster carers varied little by region (Appendix Table 8). However, there were no foster carers in the private rented sector in London, and 29% of all foster carers in London were social rented tenants. There were relatively high proportions of private renters in the East (25%), and low proportions in the East Midlands (5%) and North East (0). The greatest variations between nations and regions were in the percentage of foster carers who were social renters, although total numbers were small.

### **Use of space in the foster carers' homes**

The survey asked questions about how many bedrooms were occupied by the foster carer and family, how many by fostered children, and how many by former fostered children now aged 18 or over<sup>11</sup>. In about a third of cases, the foster carer and family occupied only one bedroom in the house, suggesting the fostering family consisted of one adult or couple, with other rooms in use for fostering or as spare rooms (Table). In another third, the fostering family occupied two rooms, suggesting a single adult or couple plus one or two of their own children. In a minority of cases, the fostering family appeared to be larger, taking up three or more bedrooms. A small minority of fostering families occupied four or more bedrooms (10%), suggesting a couple and several children, or perhaps residence of members of the extended family.

**Table 5: Number of bedrooms occupied by foster carer/s and family, excluding fostered children**

<b>Number of bedrooms</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
1	230	33%
2	256	36%
3	145	21%
4	50	7%
4+	17	2%
No answer	7	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

<sup>11</sup> A small group of respondents (11%) appeared to have read this question incorrectly. They seemed to have given the number of bedrooms occupied by foster carer/s and family, including rather than excluding fostered children, or to have referred to the use of bedrooms by current or ex-fostered children that perhaps involved sharing. This ambiguity would not affect the overall results to a great extent.

In two fifths of cases, foster carers were making one bedroom available for fostering. In another two fifths, they made two bedrooms available, and in a tenth, they made three or more available (Table 6). Thus a majority of foster carers were making any adjustments necessary to provide not just one additional bedroom but two or more. This means a majority were subject to any additional costs of two or more additional bedrooms.

**Table 6: Number of bedrooms occupied by children/young people in foster care/available if between placements**

Number of bedrooms	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
1	284	41%
2	286	41%
3	103	15%
3+	25	4%
No answer	7	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

Table 7 presents the typical increase in the minimum number of bedrooms needed by foster carer households due to fostering. This is the difference between the number of bedrooms occupied by the foster carers' household alone and the number occupied when including children/young people in foster care or bedrooms available for fostering even if the household is between placements.

The most common typical increases are from one to three bedrooms, and from two to three bedrooms (Table 7). These account for nearly half of all foster carers.

**Table 7: Typical increase in minimum number of bedrooms needed due to fostering**

<b>Change in number of bedrooms needed in order to foster</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
2 to 3 bedrooms	117	17%
1 to 3 bedrooms	101	14%
2 to 4 bedrooms	101	14%
3 to 4 bedrooms	73	10%
1 to 2 bedrooms	69	10%
3 to 5 bedrooms	54	7%
1 to 4 bedrooms	50	7%
<i>Total</i>	705	100%

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

In addition to accommodating their own households and providing space for current or new foster children, 130 (20%) of respondents were also providing accommodation to young people who were previously fostered and who still lived in the home or return on a regular basis (Appendix Table 9). Of these the majority provided just one room for this purpose, suggesting provision for one former foster child. (In these cases, carers may not be receiving any fostering allowances to cover any costs of young people. Young people may be earning and/or eligible for benefits in their own right. However, respondents raised concerns about the cost of supporting these young adults, for example in relation to the impact on Council Tax discounts).

### **How extra accommodation was provided**

For a majority of foster carers, providing space for current fostering meant providing at least double the number of bedrooms used as bedrooms by themselves and their own family. Some may not have needed to take any intentional action or incur any current out-of-pocket expenses to provide this space. One respondent said simply, “*we have spare rooms*”. However, other respondents had had to take intentional actions, and in many cases incurred expense, to get extra space to enable them to foster, and/or to make space suitable for placements. These included:

- House moves;

- Extensions;
- Adaptations;
- New fittings and equipment;
- Sharing by household members;
- Loss of 'spare' rooms.

The first four involve once-off costs. Moves to larger homes are also likely to incur higher ongoing rents or mortgages and running costs. Extensions are expensive and are likely to be funded via ongoing additions to mortgages. The last two have non-monetary costs.

### **House moves**

Several respondents described intentionally moving to bigger – and probably costlier – homes so that they could start or continue fostering, or foster more children. One respondent in an owner occupied home with at least 5 bedrooms said, *“We bought a big house with large gardens to accommodate the children”*. One respondent in a social rented home in inner London said that they had moved from a 3-bedroom property to a 4-bedroomed one *“to accommodate a foster child”*. Another social tenant, in Swindon, had carried out a mutual exchange from a two-bedroom home to a three-bedroom one *“to allow me to foster more children”*. This would mean higher rent to pay. This household was claiming Housing Benefit, but rules only allow claims to be made for the first room used for fostering. Another respondent said, *“I recently moved to able a fostered child to have his own bedroom”*. Another said, *“current home bought as it meets our fostering needs”*.

In some cases, respondents had made long-distance moves to be able to afford extra space from their own resources, by getting away from the highest cost housing markets. This could constitute a substantial compromise, even if foster carers were not left out of pocket. One respondent now living in Harwich in Essex said, *“I moved out of London, my birth place and home town for 40 years, to be able to buy a large enough home to allow me to foster”*.

Many respondents had been fostering for many years, and some had moved once or more during their fostering careers. At each point, fostering decisions and housing decisions and housing costs might be intertwined. One respondent who said costs did

come into their fostering decisions said, *“I have moved house twice since fostering and each time have had to work out what I can afford to increase space available”*.

The vast majority of respondents made these decisions on their own and did not receive financial or other assistance from fostering agencies. Eleven respondents (2%) had received assistance in moving into suitable accommodation to help them start or continue to foster (Appendix Table 11). One respondent said they had received a grant to help buy a house. However, in most cases, assistance was or appeared to be help in the allocation of social housing or shared ownership properties, rather than financial or other assistance to buy. While some social housing allocation policies contain special conditions for fostering, in some cases this ‘help’ may have been no more than the application of standard policy. In most cases this was at the point of starting fostering, or starting a particular placement, in some cases many years earlier. For example, one respondent now in the private rented sector after over ten years’ fostering with a local authority, had started off as a social renter: *“I received a letter stating I was fostering so I could move into a larger council house”*. One respondent who had been fostering for more than 20 years with the local authority and was currently a mortgaged home owner in Scotland, said,

*“I was in a 2 bedroom property and they supplied me with a 3 bedroom [presumably a social rented home, at the start of her fostering career]. They don’t help carers at all now... I have had to purchase a larger property for my daughter who is also a carer and has been on the housing list for years”*.

Another, currently a social tenant in Aylesbury, said, *“We moved into this accommodation [sic], as it is adapted for our long term special needs child”*. A foster carer currently in a shared ownership home in Stockport with one spare bedroom, said, *“They wrote a letter supporting my application for a house, when I should have only had a flat”*.

In other cases, help with housing came well into fostering careers, when space had become a pressing issue. One respondent, currently a social tenant in Leicestershire, said, *“After 8 yrs [the local authority] helped us to get 4 bedroomed house”*. This foster carer used one bedroom for their own family, and three for foster children.

## Extensions

At least 20 respondents stated explicitly that they had built extensions on their homes so that they could start, continue or expand their fostering. One said,

*“Before I started fostering I extended my house so I had 2 downstairs rooms and a kitchen diner. Later I extended into the loft so more bedrooms could be created”.*

Others said, *“I extended my 2 bedroom bungalow to a 4 bedroomed house just so that I could foster”*; *“had to add bedroom to previous home so we could foster”*; *“ I have expanded the down stairs myself so I could continue fostering when my own children returned home”*. Extensions could be used to create extra shared space as well as additional bedrooms:

*“2 extra bedrooms and a shower room, home office room, larger lounge and garden room added to our property some 13 yrs ago to accommodate our 3 birth children and offer up to 3 fostered children a bedroom each”.*

## Adaptations

At least twenty respondents mentioned having their home adapted to meet the needs of disabled children. Adaptations included ramps, lifts, downstairs bedrooms and bathrooms, wet rooms, extra bathrooms, a larger kitchen and storage space for equipment for disabled children. Adaptations were made to meet the need of individual children and on a generic basis to enable foster carers to accommodate children with disabilities. While the creation of additional space might add to the value of foster carers' homes, adaptations for disability might potentially reduce home value.

## Sharing by household members

In a study from the 2000s, some potential adopters asked their families to compromise in order to get round these barriers:

*“birth children may be required to share a room in some instances when a placement is filled in order to provide the spare room (Sinclair et al. 2004, referred to in McDermid et al. 2012 p23).*

The survey provided some additional examples. For example, one respondent said, *“when I have a placement, he [her son] sleeps on a fold down bed”*. Another respondent

received a grant from the local authority for a mobile home for their eldest child, which “freed up a bedroom for fostering another child”. One respondent who said costs were important to the decision to foster said, “I am not sure if I will have space to continue fostering when my foster son turns 18. He is part of the family and I would never expect him to leave to free up a bedroom”.

### **Loss of ‘spare’ rooms**

The survey did not ask directly about whether foster carers’ homes had spare bedroom space remaining after provision for fostering. However, some evidence can be gleaned on this (Appendix Table 10). 49% reported that they did not have ‘spare rooms’. This contrasts to the average housing pattern, and suggests that fostering has reduced their ability to have overnight visitors, or to adapt bedrooms to other uses, an ‘opportunity cost’ of fostering.

### **Other compromises on needs of foster carer’s own household members**

One respondent in a 4-bedroomed private rented home in Gloucester appeared to have compromised on housing tenure choice for their own family in order to foster:

*“We... would prefer to own our home to give more stability to all children in our home. Cost of 4 bed houses to buy huge - so hard to buy this kind of property which would be ideal for all”.*

Another respondent said that a bigger house would mean “we can all enjoy more space”.

### **Adequacy of space in foster carers’ homes**

The survey asked whether the common areas, such as kitchen, sitting area and eating area, were large enough for the foster carers’ household, including foster children or young people. 88% said they had enough room; 11% said they did not (Appendix Table 12). The survey did not ask directly if any problem was due to the presence of extra people through fostering. However it seems likely that even if space was insufficient before fostering, the problem would be exacerbated by the extra household member or members due to fostering. This represents an opportunity cost to a minority of foster

carers. It may also represent an unmet need for space for both foster carers and foster children or young people, which should be met by extra expenditure on housing space.

The survey did not ask directly about whether foster carers or their foster children felt the bedroom space was sufficient, for example, whether rooms were too small, whether there was sharing between children or young people within the family which was not acceptable to their family, or sharing between family and foster children or between foster children which would be unacceptable to most fostering agencies in most cases. Thus it did not look into the relationship between fostering and acceptable bedroom space.

## **5. DATA ON THE COSTS OF PROVIDING ONE OR MORE ADDITIONAL ROOMS FOR FOSTERING**

There are several potential approaches to calculating the additional costs of providing housing for an extra fostered child. These include: i) narrow housing costs (mortgage or rent) or wider running costs such as utilities, maintenance and tax; ii) once-off, often capital costs and ongoing costs; iii) out-of-pocket costs or 'opportunity costs'; iv) specific costs to individual foster carers or local or national averages; v) some costs may be solely attributable to fostering with benefits for the fostered child alone, but other costs may meet needs of and benefit the foster carer too (See Appendix 1).

Methods of costing the essential additional narrow housing costs of an additional bedroom space which reflect the different tenures foster are:

1. Potential earnings from an adult lodger (to determine the 'opportunity cost');
2. Marginal purchase price, mortgage costs or rent cost of an extra bedroom - the difference in costs between, for example, a 2-bedroomed home and a 3-bedroomed home;
3. Examples of out-of-pocket costs paid by foster carers for extensions.

Each of these is likely to vary by time, housing and employment market. They will vary by numerous additional factors too, some linked to the nature of the foster carers' home and household. In each case, data show the range of costs between different parts of the UK.

Data are available for a variety of areas, including all and part of the UK, nations, regions, and 'Broad Rental Market Areas'. The most recent data are for 2012, and for

2012/13. Between those dates and 2014, house prices have increased in some areas but remained fairly steady in others. Private and social rents have increased.

### Potential earnings from an adult lodger

There is no accessible and reliable source of data on average rents paid by lodgers across the UK. Some sense of charges at any one time and in any one place can be gathered from websites such as [www.spareroom.co.uk](http://www.spareroom.co.uk). However, rents for one room with shared facilities provide a good proxy for rents paid by lodgers and for the ‘opportunity cost’ of an adult lodger. Lodgers with resident landlords usually have legal rights which are weaker than those of tenants in a home with sharers but no resident landlords, but rents are unlikely to differ much.

The Valuation Office Agency provides data on ‘reference rents’ in the private rented sector, including rents for one room with shared facilities, by ‘BRMA’ (Broad Rental Market Area). There are a total of 150 BRMAs in England. Each BRMA may cover all or part of one local authority, or more than one local authority. Reference rents are calculated from information on private rental tenancies for which Housing Benefit is being paid, and from local authority rent officers’ local market knowledge. The local reference rent is the mid-point between what in the local Rent Officer’s opinion are the highest and lowest rents in a given Broad Rental Market Area, excluding exceptional cases. Median reference rents are likely to be lower than median rents for all private rented properties. Thus the opportunity cost for some foster carers may be higher than these figures suggest.

Weekly reference rents for a room with shared facilities vary widely by area (Table 8).

**Table 8: Range of weekly reference rents for a room with shared facilities, by BRMA in England, 2014**

Highest weekly reference rent		Median weekly reference rent <sup>1</sup>		Lowest weekly reference rent	
BRMA name <sup>2</sup>	Rent	BRMA name <sup>2</sup>	Rent	BRMA name <sup>2</sup>	Rent
Central London	£163.25	Harrogate	£69.98	Sunderland	£55.00

Source: <http://www.voa.gov.uk/corporate/Publications/LocalRefRents/lrr140731.html>

Note 1: Median figure is not weighted for the number of lettings in each BRMB, and is for the median BRMB, not the median letting; 2: Each BRMB may cover all or part of one local authority or more than one local authority.

In England, the Central London BRMA has the highest reference rents for one room with shared facilities. If a Central London household using two bedrooms in a three-bedroomed home decided to use its spare room to house an adult lodger rather than a fostered child, it might be able to charge the lodger £163.50 a week in rent, or £8,502 year (although part of this sum would be taxable). For a similar household in the lowest-rent BRMA, Sunderland, the weekly opportunity cost would be £55 a week, amounting to £2,860 a year. In the median BRMA, Harrogate, the opportunity cost of using the spare room for fostering would be £77 a week, amounting to £4,004 a year.

These figures are for England only. Based on other data on relative rents, the opportunity cost of not having a lodger is likely to be close to the England median in Wales, and slightly below the England median in Scotland.

### **The marginal cost of buying or renting an extra bedroom**

Housing purchase and rental costs vary according to a wide range of characteristics, which include housing tenure, housing location, built form (flat, terrace, semi-detached or detached), age of home, and its condition (see Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2014). However, in its work on a house price index, ONS has found that the number of bedrooms *“has more influence on house price than any other characteristic”* (ONS 2013 p17). The marginal cost of an extra bedroom varies by tenure, by time, and by housing market. In addition, the relative and absolute difference in cost between one-and two-bedroomed homes, for example, is different to that between four- and five-bedroomed homes.

In each case, we have chosen measures of housing costs likely to produce underestimates rather than overestimates of typical marginal costs.

### The marginal purchase price cost of an extra bedroom for home owners

A majority of all survey respondents were home owners with a mortgage (59%). More than half of respondents had been foster carers for more than five years (Appendix Table 4). Many were likely to have bought their home some years ago, facing the more

affordable house prices prevailing at that period. In the period 2007-2012, house prices have fallen and then risen again; in the period before 2007 they rose for many years. Another large group of respondents (16%) were outright owners with no current housing costs, although they will have faced mortgage costs in the past.

Data here are for 2012, for first time buyers. Prices for all buyers are higher than those for first-time buyers alone, and it is likely that marginal prices differences by size would also be larger. Thus these costs are likely to be underestimates for those considering moving to a larger home to enable fostering in 2012 or after.

The median marginal cost for an extra room varies substantially by nation or region, and by the total number of rooms (Table 9). An extra room can cost as little as £13,000, for the difference between the prices for a one bedroom and a two bedroom home in Northern Ireland or the North West of England, or it may cost £50,000 in London. It can cost as much as £250,000, for the difference between a two- bedroomed and four- bedroomed home in London, as against £49,000 in Northern Ireland. The median costs for the key size differences for foster carers are between £24,000 and £125,000.

Extra costs for England as a whole are slightly above the UK median. Extra costs for Scotland and Wales are generally slightly below the England and UK medians. Extra costs for Northern Ireland are slightly lower still (See Appendix Table 15).

**Table 9: Marginal median prices for an extra room, first time buyer purchases<sup>1</sup>, by region and nation, UK, 2012**

Difference between...	Highest marginal cost for extra room		Median marginal cost for extra room <sup>1</sup>		Lowest marginal cost for extra room	
	Region <sup>2</sup>	Difference	Region <sup>2</sup>	Difference	Region <sup>2</sup>	Difference
1 and 2 bedrooms	London	£50,000	Wales, West Midlands	£24,000; £29,000	Northern Ireland/North West	£13,000
1 and 3 bedrooms	South East	£103,000	Yorkshire and the Humber; Scotland	£43,000; £60,000	Northern Ireland	£42,000
2 and 3 bedrooms	South East	£53,000	North West; East	£35,000; £38,000	Wales	£20,000
2 and 4 bedrooms	London	£250,000	North West; South West	£124,000; £125,000	Northern Ireland	£49,000
3 and 4 bedrooms	London	£199,000	South West; North West	£85,000; £90,000	Northern Ireland	£74,000

Source: ONS; data from the Regulated Mortgage Survey, available at [www.ukhousingreview.co.uk](http://www.ukhousingreview.co.uk)

Notes 1: The costs of shared ownership are not covered here because shared owners made up just 1% of respondents; 2: Figures are not weighted for the number of sales of each size in each region. Cases where the number of rooms, rather than bedrooms, were reported are excluded. Figures for properties with one bedroom may be less reliable, because of small sample sizes.

Amongst foster carers in London, a relatively small proportion were home owners (61%), compared to the national average (75%) (Appendix Table 16). This may reflect the impact of housing costs on ability to foster. Instead, an unusually high proportion of the London respondents were social tenants, who pay sub-market rents (29%, compared to the national average of 11%).

### The marginal rent cost of an extra bedroom for private tenants

12% of respondents were private tenants. Data shown here from the Valuation Office are for 'reference rents' in the private rented sector for England. Local Reference Rents are based on total number of habitable rooms (bedrooms and living rooms, but including dining rooms, some conservatories and living kitchens). It is assumed that a one bedroomed home has two rooms (a bedroom, and a living room or living room-kitchen, as well as a bathroom)<sup>12</sup>. If larger homes actually have more rooms, for example a second living room or living kitchen, the costs of additional bedrooms will in effect be higher. As noted, reference rents are calculated from information on private rental tenancies for which Housing Benefit is being paid, and from local authority rent officers' local market knowledge. Just under half the foster carers in the survey who were private tenants were claiming Housing Benefit (Table 14 below). Thus, for two reasons, these data may underestimate the costs of some foster carers who are private tenants.

Data demonstrates the difference between reference rent levels for homes of different sizes, and the degree of variation between areas in England (Table 10).

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<sup>12</sup> Similarly, it is assumed that two bedroomed home have three rooms (two bedrooms, and living room, as well as bathroom and nonliving kitchen). It is assumed that three bedroomed home have four rooms (three bedrooms, and living room, as well as bathroom and non-living kitchen). It is assumed that four bedroomed home have five rooms (four bedrooms, and living room, as well as bathroom and non-living kitchen).

**Table 10: The range of marginal weekly reference rents for an extra room in the private rented sector, by BRMA, England, 2014**

Difference between...	Highest marginal rent for extra room		Median marginal rent for extra room <sup>13</sup>		Lowest marginal rent for extra room	
	BRMA name	Difference	BRMA name	Difference	BRMA name	Difference
1 and 2 bedrooms	Central London	£175.00	Mid and East Devon	£25.97	East Lancs.	£8.63
1 and 3 bedrooms	Central London	£400.00	Bury St. Edmunds	£47.31	East Lancs.	£23.01
2 and 3 bedrooms	Central London	£225.00	Luton	£20.19	North Nottingham	£5.77
2 and 4 bedrooms	Central London	£737.50	Bury St. Edmunds	£61.15	East Lancs.	£17.26
3 and 4 bedrooms	Central London	£512.50	Isle of Wight	£22.51	East Lancs.	£2.88

Source: <http://www.voa.gov.uk/corporate/Publications/LocalRefRents/lrr140731.html>;

In England, the Central London BRMA has the highest reference rents for each size of home, and the highest absolute differences between rents for homes of different sizes. These are much greater than the median levels (both because of variation in rents and the fact that BRMBs are smaller, more numerous and more diverse than regions). If a Central London household in a three-bedroomed home decided to move to a four-bedroomed home to provide an extra room for fostering, they could expect to pay an extra £512.50 a week in rent (or £26,500 a year). This cost is likely to be prohibitive for those not eligible for Housing Benefit, and since the introduction of the Benefit Cap in 2013, no household can claim this much Housing Benefit per year<sup>14</sup>. In fact, none of the survey respondents from London were private tenants (Appendix Table A8). Instead, an unusually high proportion of the London respondents were social tenants (29%). In effect, their sub-market housing costs may be helping them to take part in fostering.

Lowest differentials are found in a wide range of lower-demand housing markets, and amount to less than £10 a week. However, this still amounts to several hundred pounds

<sup>13</sup> The median figure is not weighted for the number of lettings in each BRMB, and is for the median BRMB, not the median letting.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/benefit-cap>

a year, which might be a substantial cost to households on low incomes. Median differentials for one extra room fall between £20 and £30 a week, adding up to £1,000 to £2,000 a year.

These figures are for England only. Based on other data on relative rents, the cost of extra rooms is likely to be close to the England median in Wales and slightly below the England median in Scotland.

#### The marginal rent cost of an extra bedroom for social tenants

11% of all respondents were social tenants. Just over half of all social housing in the UK is provided by housing associations, and just under half is provided by local authorities. Housing associations tend to charge higher rents and show greater absolute rent differential between homes of different sizes (Table 11). Since 2013, housing associations have been able to develop and rent housing at 'affordable rents' of up to 80% local market rent levels. As yet, numbers of affordable rent homes are not significant (and no survey respondents were in affordable rent accommodation). There is variation in marginal costs by form of social housing, nation or region and by the total number of rooms. However the median variation is between just under £10 and just under £20 per week.

**Table 11: The range of marginal weekly rents for an extra room in the social rented sector, by region in England, 2014<sup>15</sup>**

Difference between...		Highest marginal rent for extra room		Median marginal rent for extra room <sup>16</sup>		Lowest marginal rent for extra room	
		Region	Difference	Region	Difference	Region	Difference
1 and 2 bedrooms	Council	London	£12.93	South West	£8.04	West Midlands	£6.65
	Housing association	South East	£14.36	East Midlands	£11.86	North East	£8.99
	'Affordable'	London	£18.67	East	£8.06	South West	£3.01
1 and 3 bedrooms	Council	London	£27.40	West Midlands	£16.78	North East	£12.81
	Housing association	South East	£30.86	West Midlands	£21.18	North East	£16.45
	'Affordable'	South East	£42.14	East	£27.02	London	£19.69
2 and 3 bedrooms	Council	London	£14.47	West Midlands	£10.13	Yorks. and the Humber	£5.67
	Housing association	South East	£16.50	South West	£10.92	North East	£7.46
	'Affordable'	South East	£25.05	West Midlands	£15.72	Yorks. and Humberside	£12.11
2 and 4+ bedrooms	Council	London	£33.94	South West	£18.13	North East	£11.63
	Housing association	South East	£29.71	London	£26.02	North West	£18.03
	'Affordable'	South East	£52.52	West Midlands	£29.59	Yorks. and Humberside	£23.41
3 and 4+ bedrooms	Council	London	£19.47	South West	£8.00	North West	£5.24
	Housing association	South West	£17.55	East	£13.39	North West	£8.81
	'Affordable'	London	£36.04	East Midlands	£17.32	Yorks. and Humberside	£13.45

Source: CORE data presented in UK Housing Review 2014, available at [www.ukhousingreview.co.uk](http://www.ukhousingreview.co.uk)

<sup>15</sup> Numbers of 'affordable' rent properties were very low (below ten) in some regions

<sup>16</sup> The median figure is not weighted for the number of lettings in each BRMB, and is for the median BRMB, not the median letting.

Within England, London and the South East have the highest social rents for each size of home, and the highest absolute differences between rents for homes of different sizes. Both are many times lower than private rents in these high cost areas (see Table 11). If a London household in a three-bedroomed council home decided to (and was able to) move to a four-bedroomed home to provide an extra room for fostering, they could expect to pay an extra £19.47 a week in rent (or £1,012 a year). Lowest differentials are found in a wide range of lower-demand housing markets, and like for private renting, amount to less than £10 a week. However, this still amounts to several hundred pounds a year, which might be a substantial cost to households on low incomes. As for private renting, median differentials fall between £20 and £30 a week, adding up to £1,000 to £2,000 a year.

These figures are for England only. London is likely to have the highest marginal rents for the whole UK. Marginal rents for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are likely to be at the lower end of the scale compared to English regions.

#### Summary for rental tenures

The median forgone income from a potential single adult lodger produced the highest weekly cost across rented tenures, at close to £70, or about £3,500 per year. The median cost of additional rooms in the private and social rented sectors ranged from just under £10 to just under £30, adding up to £1,000 to £2,000 a year (Table 12).

**Table 12: Potential weekly lodger income and absolute increase in weekly cost for an additional rented bedroom for median cost area, England 2012/13**

Difference between...	Potential charge to lodgers	Private renting (reference rents)	Local authority renting	Housing association renting ('social' rents)	Housing association renting ('affordable' rents)
1 and 2 bedrooms	£69.98	£25.97	£8.04	£11.86	£8.06
1 and 3 bedrooms	£137.96	£47.31	£16.78	£21.18	£27.02
2 and 3 bedrooms	£69.98	£20.19	£10.11	£10.92	£15.72
2 and 4 bedrooms	£137.96	£61.15	£18.13	£26.02	£29.59
3 and 4 bedrooms	£69.98	£22.51	£8.00	£13.39	£17.32

Sources: ONS; data from the Regulated Mortgage Survey, available at

[www.ukhousingreview.co.uk](http://www.ukhousingreview.co.uk);

<http://www.voa.gov.uk/corporate/Publications/LocalRefRents/lrr140731.html>;

CORE data presented in UK Housing Review 2014, available at

[www.ukhousingreview.co.uk](http://www.ukhousingreview.co.uk);

The sections above have examined costs of additional rooms, measured in capital costs for home ownerships, and rental costs per week, for renters. Now it would be useful to compare costs of additional rooms across tenures. Ideally, this would be done by converting house prices into regular costs, such as the weekly cost of mortgages. However, this is difficult, because of the range of potential mortgage products and situations of borrowers, including credit scores and equity held.

The following table provides data which are comparable between tenures by looking at relative rather than absolute additional costs (Table 13).

**Table 13: Marginal relative increase in housing costs for key size differences for foster carers, England**

Change in number of bedrooms	Number of responses	Percentage of all respondents	Marginal relative increase				
			Home ownership	Private renting (reference rents)	Local authority renting	Housing association renting ('social' rents)	Housing association renting ('affordable' rents)
1 to 2	69	10%	7%	25%	6%	9%	1%
1 to 3	101	14%	27%	46%	24%	29%	7%
2 to 3	117	17%	17%	16%	12%	15%	3%
2 to 4	101	14%	82%	47%	34%	38%	23%
3 to 4	73	10%	56%	15%	11%	12%	4%
<i>Total</i>	<i>461</i>	<i>65%</i>					

Source: Tables; The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

Private renting and home ownership produced the highest marginal relative cost increases.

London and the South East produced the highest absolute housing costs and the greatest differentials between different size accommodation across tenures. A wider range of regions and BRMBs produced the lowest costs and differentials, including both Northern and Midlands areas, as well as the South West.

## 6. ASSISTANCE WITH ACCOMMODATION COSTS FOR FOSTER CARERS

Standard fostering allowances do not include a contribution towards the cost of housing. It is possible for local authorities or other agencies to provide a non-standard contribution towards the cost of housing, but the vast majority of respondents said they did not receive any such allowance. A minority were uncertain about the issue (13%).

Survey respondents reported some other existing support from fostering agencies in meeting housing costs associated with fostering. These included:

- Grants or part-grants towards extensions, conversions, adaptations and fixtures and fittings necessary for fostering;
- Assistance with housing moves for fostering;

- Council Tax Support on grounds on low income.

### **Grant from local authorities towards housing adaptations**

The majority of respondents had not applied for local authority grants (81%). Amongst those who had applied, more than half were unsuccessful (7% of all respondents). Just under half of applicants (who constituted 7% of all respondents) had received grants (Appendix Table 13).

Ten respondents had received grants for extensions to provide extra bedrooms and in some cases bathroom space. One respondent had a 3 bedroom extension onto a 3 bed roomed house. Ten had received grants for conversions of garages, roofs and outbuildings into additional bedrooms. Three had received grants to help divide existing rooms to create more bedrooms. Eleven had received grants for adaptations for disabled children, such as wet rooms, downstairs bathrooms, ramps and lifts. Adaptations also could be quite substantial. One respondent had received a *“Bedroom downstairs, wet room, as well as a larger kitchen for disabled child”*. Smaller items included furniture, an accessible garden for a disabled child, security and ‘safeguarding’ measures such as safety glass, boxing in bannisters, and security locks.

The survey did not ask detailed financial questions, but respondents’ comments showed that in some cases funding was only partial, leaving respondents to pay part of the costs. Partial funding can be explained by tight local authority budgets, the large sums involved, and the fact that some changes would be likely to add to the value of owner occupiers’ homes. However, in some cases the local authority contribution was small relative to total costs. Another said that they had received just £500 towards an extension to provide a fourth bedroom, and *“this is refundable if we stop fostering before a set period”*. Another received an interest free loan to convert their attic. One respondent received a grant that covered one fifth of the cost of an extension. One respondent said that they had received,

*“£30,000 to adapt my garage but I needed to pay well over £20,000 to adapt my kitchen to make it accessible and I need an extension on the side to enable me to store all the supplies my foster child needs, including lots of equipment”*.

Some adaptations for disabilities were only part-funded. These adaptations might be less likely to add to the value of owner occupiers' homes, and might possibly reduce values. Smaller items also might be part funded: one respondent reported part-funding of a new bed *"so we could have siblings"*.

There were some signs of tensions with local authorities over funding. Another said the local authority had paid for an extension, *"this was made a condition [of] the Children's Hearing therefore the La had to do it"*. Another issue for respondents was the delay in getting funding for changes. A social tenant said,

*"We have looked after 4 children for 9 years after 4 years local authority agreed to add extension to our existing 3 bed house, this took a further 5 years to come to fruition, not a moment too soon with 4 now teenagers at home along with ourselves and our grown up children"*.

## **Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit**

Council tax falls on householders in England, Scotland and Wales and can be seen as part of wider 'housing costs'. A small minority of foster carers in the survey (9%), mostly English, stated that they received Council Tax Support on grounds of being foster carers. However, information being collected about Council Tax Support across all English local authorities gives no evidence for general policies to support foster carers in the first two years of local schemes.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that respondents received Council Tax Support on other grounds such as low income, or under 'hardship' schemes operated by local authorities

One respondent who said costs were important to the decision to foster referred to the council tax in particular, saying they were thinking of moving to a smaller home to reduce the charge. Two respondents received single person discount and said this affected their ability to offer continuing support to foster children after 18: one said, *"I have to request the removal of young people when they reach 18 as I can't afford to lose that 25% discount"*.

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<sup>17</sup> Detailed information on policies in individual English local authorities is available at: <http://counciltaxsupport.org/schemes/>.

A small minority of all respondents (11%) and just under half of all who were tenants received Housing Benefit (Table 14). Housing Benefit is awarded on the basis of low income (and rent levels) and fostering status is not a consideration.

**Table 14: Use of Housing Benefit**

<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Number in this tenure</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of all responses</b>	<b>Percentage of this tenure group</b>
Renting from a local authority or housing association	76	44	6%	59%
Renting from a private landlord	87	36	5%	41%
<i>Total</i>	<i>163</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>11%</i>	<i>49%</i>

Source: The Fostering Network 2014 survey of members

Respondents were asked if the proportion of rent paid by the benefit had changed as a result of recent rule changes (the social rented sector size criterion or 'bedroom tax'). More had experienced recent decreases than had experienced recent increases. Most did not have any 'spare' rooms that were not being used by family or foster children, and it was not clear if they were connected to the social rented sector size criterion.

## **7. SURVEY EVIDENCE ON OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS TO FOSTER CARERS OF PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION**

Where there were direct accommodation costs from fostering (rather than opportunity costs) which were not met in full by local authority support (see above), many foster carers paid these extra costs themselves. As noted, half of those who had applied for local authority grants were not successful. The survey did not ask for financial details, but respondents' comments provide some evidence on the prevalence and size of out-of-pocket costs to foster carers of providing accommodation.

## Extensions, adaptations and additional fittings

More respondents had paid for changes to their home to enable fostering than had received grants from local authorities to do so. Several comments gave detailed costs for work to home they had paid for themselves, in some cases supported by part-local authority funding (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Examples of costs of work to homes to provide accommodation for fostering funded by foster carers**

£50,000 (see below)

£29,000

£20,000

£8,000 (see below)

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

Comments included:

*"I had to increase my mortgage by £50,000 because the LA want the [looked after children] in their own bedroom. It was hinted that the [looked after children] could be placed back with the LA. So we have to keep going long past retirement age";*

*"I had to add another bedroom in order to separate 2 siblings who had previously shared a bedroom. This cost me £8000+ of my own money! as the local authority refused to move a child to another home. The authority told me they could not contribute towards the costs I incurred";*

*"I extended my 2 bedroom bungalow to a 4 bedroomed house just so that I could foster";*

*"Had to add bedroom to previous home so we could foster";*

*"I have extended the down stairs myself so I could continue fostering when my own children returned home. I didn't ask for any grant as I don't think its an option in [this area]";*

*"We... paid a lot of our own money to have 2 extra bedrooms and a shower room, home office room, larger lounge and garden room added to our property some 13 yrs ago to accommodate our 3 birth children and offer up to 3 fostered children a bedroom each".*

Self-funded work included adaptations to enable the fostering of disabled children. Residents had also self-funded smaller items, such as a fence and gate to improve garden security. One respondent raised the issue of paying for the needs of over-18s: *“Built an extension to keep our long term foster child with learning disabilities when he turned 18 out of our own money”*.

### **Additional rent and mortgage costs**

Some comments provide direct evidence of the additional mortgage and rent costs borne by respondents due to having additional space. One respondent in private rented housing said, *“I recently moved to enable a fostered child to have his own bedroom, it now costs me more and I get no help”*. The family was living in a three-bedroom private rented home in Romford in Essex, 2 bedrooms being occupied by the foster carer/s and their family, and one by the fostered child. In August 2014 the bottom 30<sup>th</sup> percentile weekly private rent, for which Housing Benefit is payable, for a two-bedroomed home in that area (the Outer North East London BRMA) was £191 while for a three-bedroom home it was £233, a difference of £42 a week or £2,184 a year.

Some respondents were partly meeting the extra housing costs of fostering through their general income from fostering allowances and fees, which were not continuous (and which do not appear to have included a specific element for accommodation). One private tenant in a home with five or more bedrooms in Eastleigh in Hampshire said, *“I find it difficult to meet my rent if I have less than 2 placements”*. The difference in reference rent between a three-bedroomed and a five-bedroomed home in this area was £64 a week. Similarly, another respondent in a four-bedroom home in Essex said, *“I have a large mortgage that I have to meet on a monthly basis even when placements have moved on and I have empty rooms”*.

## **8. THE ROLE OF HOUSING AND HOUSING COST IN DECISIONS TO FOSTER AND TO CONTINUE TO FOSTER**

Just under half of the survey respondents, all currently fostering or waiting for a placement to be made, said that they thought that the cost and availability of suitable accommodation affected the decision and/or ability to foster (46%). Just over half said

that it did not (52%) and 2% gave no answer. It was not clear if respondents were answering in relation to their own situation, or in relation to others.

Respondents who owned their homes outright, with no mortgage costs, and social renters, with sub-market rents, were slightly under-represented amongst those who said the cost and availability of suitable accommodation did affect the decision and/or ability to foster; on the other hand private renters were slightly overrepresented (Appendix Table 15). Respondents who provided just one room for fostering were slightly overrepresented amongst those who said cost was important. The survey did not ask respondents about their household income or ability to pay housing costs. There was no marked pattern by location amongst those who said the cost did affect their decision to foster.

More information emerges through other comments made by respondents. The survey did not distinguish between family and friends carers / kinship carers and others. Two respondents revealed that they were kinship carers and this meant that they were all the more committed to paying necessary extra housing costs. One said,

*“It was my niece; I paid every penny; I had to fight for her and move to bigger accommodation as anyone would do for family”.*

Another who also said housing costs were not a barrier for her said, by way of explanation, *“we are fostering our nieces”.*

However, other foster carers found the costs prohibitive. One respondent, owner of a 3-bedroomed home in Plymouth, had temporarily stopped fostering due to housing costs: *“I am approved to foster babies and children under 5, but I am currently unable to as I have to work part time in order to pay the mortgage.”* Another respondent, tenant of a 4-bedroomed private rented home in Preston, who had been turned down for a local authority grant in the past, was considering changing the placements they offered because of housing costs:

*“I am considering only short term [placements] and moving to a smaller house because of high costs and high rent. This means my foster children may have to move placements. Very sad”.*

One respondent said that cost did not affect decisions now, but *“it did when my children were younger”.*

Much existing research focusses on the number of foster carers and the extent to which costs deter them. Another important issue is the number of children each is able to foster, and the type of needs they are able to meet. One respondent, who said costs were not important to the decision to foster, said nonetheless that, although they had a 4-bedroomed home, if they had a larger house they might foster more children, especially larger sibling groups. One in three sibling groups are reported to be separated, although it is generally seen as good practice to keep siblings together<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, another respondent who said costs were important to the decision to foster made the same point: *“another bedroom would enable us to take another child!”*, while another said *“I can only do respite because I only have 1 spare room and my grandchildren need a turn to stay with me”*. Two more who said costs were important said if this issue could be overcome they could take disabled children.

Some respondents were concerned about the quality of placement they were able to offer: *“I have a box room which I will have to use for my next fostered child when my present placement stays put.... I can't afford to extend it myself but feel it's not big enough for a teenager to stay in”*. Another with a four bedroom home in which three bedrooms were used for foster children said, *“one bathroom is not enough. We could function better with two”*. Another said, *“Different accommodation would make life simpler”*.

## **9. IMPLICATIONS FOR FOSTERING AND FOR FOSTERING AGENCIES**

The Fostering Network has estimated that in 2014 8,600 more fostering households are needed in the UK to provide sufficient places for demand<sup>19</sup>. In particular, more foster carers are needed for teenagers, sibling groups, and children with disabilities, all of whom are likely to present accommodation needs which are more difficult for potential foster carers to satisfy. In earlier research, lack of suitable accommodation was identified by existing adopters as among the possible barriers faced by potential adopters in the UK (e.g. Triseliotis et al. 2000, Davies and Padley 2013). A 2010 study

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<sup>18</sup> [www.fostering.net/media/2014/response-report-one-in-three-sibling-groups-are-separated](http://www.fostering.net/media/2014/response-report-one-in-three-sibling-groups-are-separated)

<sup>19</sup> Figures released by The Fostering Network 08/01/2014  
<https://www.fostering.net/media-release/2014/thousands-new-foster-families-needed-in-2014#.VVyzlUaYHok>

found that 65% of foster carers thought allowances and fees were insufficient, and 36% had 'seriously considered' giving up fostering on financial grounds (Tearse 2010).

It is worth recapping some key findings in this report in order to summarise the implications. As previously discussed, just under half of the survey respondents thought that the cost and availability of suitable accommodation did not affect the decision and/or ability to foster. However, just under half said that it did. Individual respondents revealed that they were considering ceasing to offer any placements, or considering offering a reduced range. Others said if they could afford a larger or adapted home, they would take more placements or a wider variety of placements.

Some foster carers had spare rooms when they first considered fostering. These households did not need to take any intentional action or incur any out-of-pocket narrow housing costs to provide space. But they still incurred opportunity costs, as well as ongoing wider housing costs (not calculated here) and the same applies to outright home owners (16% of respondents). The proxy for the opportunity cost of not getting a lodger (the reference rent for a single non self-contained room) in the median Broad Rental Market Area in England in 2014 was £70 a week for Harrogate, with a range from £55 in Sunderland to £164 in Central London. In all but the highest cost areas, extra costs for extra space were lower than the income that could be gained from an adult lodger using that space.

Other respondents had to take intentional actions, and in many cases to incur expense, to get extra and suitable space. A minority of respondents mentioned moving house to get a larger home more suitable for fostering, likely to mean higher ongoing costs (others may have incurred opportunity cost by deferring downsizing). Just 1% of respondents had received help with moving, mostly non-monetary help from social landlords.

The number of bedrooms has more influence on house price than any other characteristic. In the median of the UK's nations and English or regions in 2012, the typical minimum additional space needs due to fostering (for example, a shift from a one-bedroom to a two- or three-bedroom home) meant increases in house prices of between 7% and 56%.

In the UK in 2012, the extra cost for the typical extra space needed by home owner foster carers in the mid-range part of the country was £24,000-£125,000. The ongoing, monthly cost to foster carers would depend on the kind of mortgage they obtained.

The marginal cost of an extra bedroom varies by area of the UK, as well as by tenure, by total number of bedrooms and over time. For home buyers, an extra room could cost as little as £13,000, for the difference between the prices for a one-bedroom and two-bedroom home in Northern Ireland or the North West of England, to £250,000 for the difference between a two-bedroom and four-bedroom home in London.

In private renting, the typical additional minimum space needs for fostering meant increases in rents of 15-64%. In social renting, they meant increases in rents of 6%-38%.

For social renting (excluding 'affordable rent' homes), extra costs for the typical extra space needed by foster carers were in the range £10-£20 a week in the median region in England in 2014. In the lowest cost regions, in the midlands and north, extra costs were under £10 a week, and in the highest cost regions, London and the South East, they were close to £20 a week. These sums might appear modest, but they form a substantial fraction of modest incomes. In 2011 in Great Britain, heads of household in social renting had a median weekly income of £203 (council renters) and £228 (housing association renters)<sup>20</sup>. A 2010 study found that over a quarter of foster carers claimed Working Tax Credit, to support low income for people in work, and a quarter claimed means-tested out-of-work benefits (Tearse 2010).

For private renting, the extra costs for extra space in the median Broad Rental Market Area were slightly more than those for social housing, in the range £20-30 a week. In the lowest cost areas, such as social housing found in the midlands and north, extra costs were, again like for social housing, under £10 a week. However, in the highest cost areas, found in London and the South East, extra costs for extra private rented space were dramatic. The difference in reference rent between a two- and a four-bedroomed home in Central London was £737.50 a week. In 2011 in Great Britain, heads of household in private renting (furnished tenancies) had a median income of £421 a week,

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<sup>20</sup> Data from General Household survey reported as part of the UK Housing Review 2014, <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ukhr/ukhr14/tables&figures/pdf/14-036ab.pdf>

adequate to absorb extra costs in low and median areas, but completely inadequate in highest cost areas<sup>21</sup>.

A large minority of respondents mentioned extensions, conversions, disabled adaptations, or additional fixtures and fittings for their homes to enable fostering, which could cost tens of thousands of pounds. 7% of respondents had received some local authority funding for this work. Funding was sometimes partial, and in some cases, respondents paid the lion's share. 7% had applied for local authority funding but been turned down. Similar numbers had paid for this work themselves. Other approaches included getting household members to share. Foster carers quoted out-of-pocket costs of £8,000-50,000. This suggests that in all but the lowest cost areas, an extension or conversion, where feasible, might be cheaper than a move to a larger home.

As a result, the availability and use of local authority grants for extensions, conversions, adaptations and other fixtures and fittings should be considered as a strategy for meeting fostering needs.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence presented in this report of the tensions between housing costs and fostering needs points towards the conclusion that some consideration should be given to the merits of a mechanism for reflecting housing costs in the system of fostering allowances, especially if a shortage of foster care placements is a problem in particular geographical areas or for particular children such as sibling groups.

In 2014/15, Department for Education minimum weekly fostering allowances (lower than those advocated by The Fostering Network) ranged from £119 for a baby in England outside the South East and London, to £209 for a teenager in London<sup>22</sup>. Adding an element to reflect additional ongoing housing costs of £10 to £30 a week for rentals in median cost areas would mean a modest percentage increases in allowances. However, adding an element to reflect additional home ownership and private renting costs in London and the South East would mean a dramatic increase in allowances.

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<sup>21</sup> Data from General Household survey reported as part of the UK Housing Review 2014, <http://www.york.ac.uk/res/ukhr/ukhr14/tables&figures/pdf/14-036ab.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> [http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/nma%20rates\\_001.pdf](http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/n/nma%20rates_001.pdf)

Consequently in high cost housing areas, strategies such as the provision of social housing to foster carers who want it may also warrant consideration.

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## APPENDIX 1: METHODS FOR CALCULATING THE COSTS OF PROVIDING ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION FOR FOSTERING

There are several approaches and choices to be made in calculating what the additional costs of providing housing for an extra child might be to foster carers:

*i) Narrow housing costs or broader housing costs.* As noted above (Figure 1), 'housing costs' can be seen fairly narrowly as the direct costs of mortgage or rent, or more broadly as a group of different costs associated with setting up and maintaining a home.

Narrow housing costs are rarely factored into the support received by foster carers in return for carrying out the fostering task.

Broader housing costs have been given more consideration in the context of the costs of foster care, and are more typically recognized as a component of fostering allowances, although probably underestimated. A recent study found that in fostering households many of the broader costs were higher, ranging from additional heating, to furniture and equipment, and higher requirements for safety and security (Davies and Padley 2013).

*ii) Once-off, often capital costs and ongoing costs.* Creating extra space through extensions or conversions and providing new equipment are once-off costs, best compensated for by a once-off grant. Additional mortgage, rent and running costs are ongoing, best compensated for by an ongoing allowance. Buying a home usually requires a once-off deposit and ongoing mortgage.

*iii) Specific costs to individual foster carers, or local or national averages.* Both narrow and broader housing costs will vary substantially between individual foster carers, particularly for reasons relating to the home, household and foster child or young person, but also partly due to where in the country the foster carer is located. Both narrow and broad housing costs vary by country, region, local authority and type of neighbourhood and settlements. There are additional costs, including 'wider' housing costs, to raising children in rural areas, as well as variation between the countries of the UK (ref).

*iv) Real out-of-pocket housing costs, or 'opportunity costs'.* For some foster carers, who move home to acquire the extra space needed to foster, real out-of-pocket costs might include once-off moving costs, associated costs with decorating and fitting out part of the new home, and ongoing costs for any additional rent or mortgage, repairs and cleaning, utilities and council tax. This could represent a very substantial amount of money for

those people living in the highest cost housing markets. For other foster carers, who already happen to have spare room in their home, once-off costs would be limited, although there would still be ongoing additional costs. In theory, real out-of-pocket costs could be calculated on a case-by-case basis through use of receipts and bills. Some fostering agencies provide full or part funding for some additional housing costs on this basis. However it could be seen as unfair if there is a great contrast between those with moving and resulting mortgage and rent costs, for example we would expect higher costs for home owners and private renters and for those in more expensive housing markets. It could also be seen as unfair if there is a great contrast between those moving to get a spare room and those already having a spare room. Another issue is that moving decisions might not be determined solely by the desire to gain extra space for fostering, and other household members may benefit to some extent from having a different home and additional space required for fostering.

In contrast, 'opportunity costs' related to housing are the foregone costs of doing something else with the space which will be used for fostering. There are opportunity costs even if foster carers did not have any out of pocket costs. For example, the bedroom and other household space allotted to the foster child might have otherwise been used as extra space for the foster carer/s and their family (for example, as an office, a spare room for overnight visitors, or to allow foster carers' own children to have their own rooms). One way of pricing the opportunity cost of using a spare bedroom (and any other space in the home) for a foster child is to consider the potential forgone earnings from having an adult lodger in that space. Opportunity costs are intended to be distinct from real out-of-pocket costs. However, it is worth noting that many foster carers may not have seriously considered having an adult lodger. Another issue is that again, other household members may benefit to some extent from having the larger home associated with fostering.

*v) Costs solely attributable to fostering and benefits for the fostered child alone, or costs at least partly or fully attributable to meeting needs of the foster carer and benefits for them.* Some foster carers may not have needed to take any intentional action or incur any current out-of-pocket expenses to provide space for fostering. Others had to take intentional actions and in many cases to incur expense to get extra space to enable them to foster. There will be intermediate cases, where actions and expense were taken partly with a view to fostering, and partly for households' own current or future purposes. This could make it difficult to attribute liability for expenses. In addition, foster carers themselves may benefit from extra space, particularly if they are home owners who might at some point make a capital gain on a larger home.

## APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL TABLES

**Table A1: Length of placements provided**

<b>Length of placements</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Long-term placements	482	68%
Short-term placements	472	67%
Respite care	325	46%
<i>All three placement types</i>	197	28%
<i>Two types</i>	202	29%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A2: Age of children fostered**

<b>Age of children fostered</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Babies and young children	279	40%
Children 5-11	351	50%
Children 12-18	342	49%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A3: Groups fostered**

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Parent and baby	47	7%
Sibling groups	325	46%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A4: Length of fostering career**

<b>Length of career in years</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Less than 1 year	52	7%
1 to 5 years	287	41%
6 to 10 years	73	10%
11 to 20 years	124	18%
21 years+	69	10%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A5: Type of agency foster carers were fostering for**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Local authority (or Health Authority in Northern Ireland)	510	72%
Independent fostering agency	195	28%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A6: Location of foster carers: Urbanity of area**

<b>Type of area</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Inner city	50	7%
Outer city	98	14%
<i>City (inner or outer)</i>	148	21%
Town	295	42%
A village or rural location	257	36%
<i>No answer</i>	5	1%
<i>Total respondents</i>	705	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A7: Built form and presence of garden or yard**

Built form	Number of responses	Percentage of responses	Outdoor space (garden or yard)	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
House	652	92%	Private	645	92%
			Shared	4	*
			None	4	*
Flat	13	2%	Private	2	*
			Shared	2	*
			Balcony	1	*
			None	8	1%
Bungalow	26	4%	Private	26	
Maisonette	3	*	Private	1	*
			None	2	*
No answer	6	1%	Private	1	*
			None	5	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>700</i>			<i>701</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A8: Housing tenure by nation and region within England**

Region	Owners with mortgage		Outright owners		Private renters		Social renters		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	NUMBER
UK	404	60%	115	17%	86	13%	72	11%	677
Scotland	65	62%	20	19%	11	10%	9	9%	105
Wales	23	58%	5	13%	7	18%	5	13%	40
Northern Ireland	16	62%	5	19%	4	15%	1	4%	26
South East	62	65%	10	11%	11	12%	12	13%	95
East	36	44%	20	25%	20	25%	5	6%	81
North West	33	53%	9	15%	8	13%	12	19%	62
South West	36	59%	13	21%	9	15%	3	5%	61
Yorkshire and Humberside	37	60%	11	18%	6	10%	8	13%	62
West Midlands	34	65%	10	19%	8	15%		2%	52
East Midlands	22	56%	9	23%	2	5%	6	15%	39
London	18	64%	2	7%	0	0%	8	29%	28
North East	22	85%	1	4%	0	0%	3	12%	26
<i>Total</i>									

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014; Note: This table excludes shared owners and those who gave no answers for tenure.

**Table A9: Number of bedrooms in home occupied by young people who were previously fostered and who still lived in the home or returned on a regular basis**

<b>Number of bedrooms</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
0	568	81%
1	95	13%
2	29	4%
3	5	0.7%
3+	1	0.1%
No answer	7	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A10: ‘Spare’ bedrooms (not in use for foster, family, fostered children or young people or potential placements, or young people who were previously fostered and who still live in the home or return on a regular basis)**

<b>Number of spare bedrooms</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>	<b>Percentage of responses</b>
0	345	49%
1	53	8%
2	5	1%
Ambiguous or negative number <sup>1</sup>	283	39%
No answer	7	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>706</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014  
 Note 1: A large number of responses were ambiguous, due to open ended categories in numbers of bedrooms in the home or in use by the foster carer and family, or negative, possibly due to respondent error.

**Table A11: Assistance in moving into suitable accommodation when started fostering**

Assistance	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Received assistance	11	2%
Didn't	677	95%
No answer	17	3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014

**Table A12: Whether common spaces in the home were sufficient**

Sufficient	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	621	88%
No	77	11%
No answer	7	1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	<i>100%</i>

Source: The Fostering Network 2014 survey of members

**Table A13: Whether foster carers had ever received a grant towards the housing adaptations required for fostering**

	Number of respondents <sup>1</sup>	Percentage
Did not apply	574	81%
Applied for but did not receive	56	7%
Received	51	7%
No answer	17	2%
Applied for and waiting our outcome	3	*
Did not know about grants	3	*
<i>Total</i>	<i>705</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network survey, July 2014. Note 1: Some cases where respondents answered that they had received grants but comments suggested they did not have been reallocated.

**Table A14: Recent changes in amount of Housing Benefit received as a result of changes in benefit rules, by tenure**

Tenure	Number in this tenure	Number of responses	Percentage of this tenure group
Renting from a local authority or housing association	76	Increased – 6 Decreased – 9	Increased – 14% Decreased – 21%
Renting from a private landlord	87	Increased – 7 Decreased – 13 NA – 1	Increased – 19% Decreased – 37%
<i>Total</i>	163	<i>Same – 44</i> <i>Increased – 13</i> <i>Decreased – 22</i> <i>NA – 1</i>	

Source: The Fostering Network 2014 survey of members

**Table A15: Marginal median prices for an extra room, first time buyer purchases<sup>1</sup>, for median English region and UK nations, 2012**

Difference between...	Median region in England		Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
	Region	Amount			
1 and 2 bedrooms	East Midlands	£30,000	£22,000	£24,000	£13,000
1 and 3 bedrooms	West Midlands	£62,000	£60,000	£44,000	£42,000
2 and 3 bedrooms	North East	£38,000	£38,000	£22,000	£21,000
2 and 4 bedrooms	West Midlands	£129,000	£113,000	£104,000	£92,000
3 and 4 bedrooms	South West	£85,000	£75,000	£84,000	£63,000

Source: ONS; data from the Regulated Mortgage Survey, available at [www.ukhousingreview.co.uk](http://www.ukhousingreview.co.uk)

Notes 1: The costs of shared ownership are not covered here because shared owners made up just 1% of respondents; 2: Figures are not weighted for the number of sales of

each size in each region. Cases where the number of rooms, rather than bedrooms, were reported are excluded. Figures for properties with one bedroom may be less reliable, because of small sample sizes.

**Table A16: Characteristics of those who said the cost and availability of suitable accommodation does affect the decision and/or ability to foster**

		Number of responses	Percentage of yes responses in this category	Percentage of all responses in this category
Housing tenure	Owned outright	35	11%	16%
	Owned with mortgage	190	59%	59%
	Shared ownership	3	1%	1%
	Rented from a private landlord	59	18%	12%
	Rented from a local authority or housing association	30	9%	11%
Number of rooms provided for fostering	1	147	46%	41%
	2	137	42%	41%
	3	43	13%	15%
	3+	10	3%	4%
Location	London	18	6%	5%
	South East	40	12%	18%
	East	43	13%	16%
	South West	24	7%	12%
	West Midlands	32	10%	12%
	East Midlands	17	5%	7%
	North West	38	12%	13%
	North East	10	3%	5%
	Yorkshire and Humber	23	7%	9%
	Scotland	51	16%	15%
	Northern Ireland	9	3%	4%
	Wales	17	5%	6%
Non UK	1	*	0	
<i>Total</i>		323		705

Source: The Fostering Network survey of members, July 2014